

DEAN'S LETTER FOR TUFTS MEDICINE

Academic dean appointed for master's programs

Aviva Must, Ph.D., has been appointed dean of academic affairs in the Office of Public Health and Professional Degree Programs at the School of Medicine. A faculty member since 1992, Must is a professor of public health and family medicine as well as vice chair for academic affairs in the department of public health and family medicine.

Must is also a professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts, from which she received her master's and doctoral degrees. Her research focuses on the epidemiology of obesity across the lifespan. In her new role, she is responsible for curriculum design, development and implementation, evaluation and feedback, faculty development and oversight of program faculty for the School of Medicine's master's degree programs.

Under the leadership of **Harris A. Berman, M.D.**, dean of public health and professional degree programs, the master's programs have grown dramatically over the past decade. The Office of Public Health and Professional Degree Programs now offers graduate degrees in Public Health, Health Communication, Business Administration in Health Management, Pain Research, Education and Policy and Biomedical Sciences.

Scientific innovator

In a move to drive innovative biomedical research, the National Institutes of Health has made a major investment in the future of science by awarding more than \$105 million in funding to 41 exceptional investigators, including **Ekaterina Heldwein, Ph.D.**, assistant professor of molecular biology and microbiology at Tufts School of Medicine.

The New Innovator Award, granted for the first time this year, is part of the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research initiative. Designed to support early-career scientists, the award recognizes bold ideas with \$1.5 million grants over five years. Heldwein and the 29 other recipients were chosen from more than 2,000 applicants. She studies herpesviruses and how they enter host cells. Understanding how these viruses—which cause cold sores, infectious mononucleosis and cancer, among other illnesses—infect cells could help scientists design antiviral therapies to block infection.

Earlier this year, Heldwein was selected as one of 20 Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences, receiving \$240,000 over four years to support her research. The Pew Scholars are among the nation's finest biomedical research pioneers.

DECEMBER 2007

HERE & THERE

Alan W. Hackford, M.D., associate professor of surgery, has been appointed chief of colorectal surgery at Caritas St. Elizabeth's Medical Center. Hackford was previously vice chair of clinical affairs in the department of general surgery at Tufts-New England Medical Center. A graduate of the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Hackford completed both his residency and a fellowship in surgical research at Tufts-NEMC. His training also includes a fellowship in colon and rectal surgery at the Lahey Clinic.

J. Peter Rubin, M.D., M92, received the 2007 Presidential Early Career Award for Science and Engineering at a recent White House ceremony. A plastic surgeon, Rubin was recognized for his pioneering tissue engineering research. Co-director of the Adipose Stem Cell Center at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and assistant professor of plastic and reconstructive surgery at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Rubin works with stem cells derived from fat tissue, a technology that might one day generate replacement tissue for breast cancer survivors, wounded soldiers or children with birth defects.

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LAHEY ACCREDITATION

The Lahey Clinic Center for Surgical Weight Loss has been recognized by the Bariatric Surgery Center Network Accreditation Program of the American College of Surgeons as a Level 1a facility, meaning it can manage the most challenging and complex patients. During on-site visits, a team of veteran bariatric surgeons concluded the center provides the highest quality of care. "The key to our positive outcomes is our team of surgeons, nurse practitioners, nutritionists and psychologists who are committed to a coordinated system of care," said **David Brams, M.D.**, director of the program. The accreditation allows the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to provide expanded coverage of the surgery for beneficiaries diagnosed with obesity-related health problems.

IN MEMORIAM

A beloved figure who taught hematology to generations of Tufts medical students, **W. Jack Mitus, M.D.**, professor emeritus, died after a brief illness in September. He was 87. Born in Poland, Mitus fled his Nazi-occupied homeland for England, where he served as a paratrooper. After the war, he earned his medical degree from the University of Edinburgh. In 1955, he became a research fellow in hematology at NEMC. He also oversaw the teaching of hematology at the School of Medicine, where he quickly became a popular professor. Mitus delivered the commencement address to the Class of 1975, and he won the student-selected teaching award in 1981 and 1982. He also received university faculty awards each year from 1973 to 1988. His family plans to establish a prize for excellence in teaching in his name.

Pioneer in infectious diseases

Sherwood L. Gorbach, M.D., a researcher and educator who has shaped the discipline of infectious diseases for more than 40 years, received a lifetime achievement award at the annual meeting of the Infectious Diseases Society of America in October. The Alexander Fleming Award (formerly the Bristol Award) recognizes Gorbach for his work in microbial pathogenesis and clinical research in infectious diseases, including cholera, *E. coli*, *C. difficile* and probiotics.

Gorbach is a professor of public health and family medicine and a member of the division of geographic medicine and infectious diseases at Tufts-New England Medical Center. The award, named for the discoverer of penicillin, also lauds Gorbach for his stewardship of one of the society's two journals. During his tenure as editor, Gorbach has made *Clinical Infectious Diseases* the premier clinical journal in its field. He is a 1962 alumnus of the medical school and also is a professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts.

He is the fifth person affiliated with Tufts School of Medicine or Tufts-New England Medical Center to receive this prestigious honor in the 44 years that the award has been presented. The other Tufts and Tufts-NEMC recipients are **Louis Weinstein, M.D., Ph.D.**; **Sheldon M. Wolff, M.D.**; **Gerald Keusch, M.D.**; and **John G. Bartlett, M.D.**

New chair of neuroscience

Philip Haydon, Ph.D., has been appointed chair of neuroscience at Tufts University School of Medicine, succeeding interim chair **Rob Jackson, Ph.D.**, professor of neuroscience. Haydon comes to Tufts from the University of Pennsylvania, where he served as professor and vice chair of neuroscience.

His laboratory investigates synaptic transmission and has identified novel roles for glial cells in the regulation of neuronal function. He has made contributions to our understanding of normal brain function and the pathophysiology of epilepsy and other diseases, work that could one day lead to therapies to treat these conditions.

A past recipient of an Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship, a McKnight Investigator Award and a Jacob Javits Investigator Award, Haydon is a frequent speaker at national and international conferences and serves in professional societies, on NIH review panels and on editorial boards. He has published nearly 100 papers in professional journals, including *Nature*, *Science*, *Neuron*, the *Journal of Neuroscience* and *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. His research is supported by grants from the NIH as well as industry.

FEEDBACK

The *Dean's Letter for Tufts Medicine* is published eight times a year by the Office of the Dean of Tufts University School of Medicine. We welcome comments and story ideas. Contact Editor Jacqueline Mitchell at jacqueline.mitchell@tufts.edu or 617.636.3602.

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